

A SPOILED SON BECOMES A SUFFERING SERVANT

Gen. 30:24-25; 37; Ps. 105:16-19; Acts 7:9

"It's not fair!" cries the child. "It's just not fair!"

And so begins our life-long endeavor, as parents, to teach our children: **LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS FAIR!**

Does the child in you ever cry out, "It's not fair?"

Do you ever wonder about God's justice? Or life's fairness?

Joseph did.

So have many other great men and women of God down through the ages!

If you've ever wondered whether God is really in control; whether He really cares about injustice, or what's happening to you, you have lots of company among God's people. For the next few weeks we're going to consider one of the greatest men of biblical history.

A man who certainly understands *OUR* questions about God's justice!

WHAT WERE SOME PAINFUL EXPERIENCES JOSEPH ENDURED?

His mom took part in family deception to get her older sister married to his father, whom she loved.

Then she competed with that sister to earn the love of his dad, by having children

Joseph grew up as a pawn in that competition

He became the "favorite son" of the favorite wife, so all his brothers hated him

His sister was raped by a pagan neighbor

His brothers murdered the rapist and all his relatives

These same brothers *plotted* to kill *him*—he certainly knew they were capable of doing it!

Finally, *they sold him* as a **slave**, and lied to his father about it

He was seduced by his boss' wife

When he rejected her, he was framed, accused of sexual harassment

He was forgotten by friends he helped

He spent more than two years in prison for a crime he didn't commit

If anyone ever had reason to feel angry and bitter, it was Joseph.

It's going to take us several weeks to let it all sink in!

But, Joseph didn't let his afflictions get in the way of his trust in God!

Joseph became an O.T. hero—presented as type of Christ—the true Suffering Servant!

How could one born in such pain and dysfunction amount to anything?

Like Joseph, *OUR* pain often originates where we expect shelter and security: our family, our home.

Our family may be source of *the deepest* pain—abuse, neglect, feeling unwanted, or uncared for.

We may be living with memories of parental conflict, family secrets, or the pain of a family break up.

We may feel shame about something someone did to us, over which we had no control.

But that shame is just as much part of our pain, as if we had done something ourselves. Sometimes we carry pain, not from family, but **from other places**.

We may have been bullied, or abused, as children.
 It may be **grown up pain** we carry—friend betrayed us, financial reversal, marital crisis, failed career,
 perhaps a church split, or failure of a respected spiritual leader,
 disappointment of having loved someone, and not being loved in return.
Joseph—like some of us—had more than his share of pain.

When trapped in prison, falsely accused and alone, it didn't *FEEL* like God was on his side!
Did it?

How could a loving God let such painful things come into your life?
 All he wanted was to live for God, and look what it got him!

Joseph could've become angry and bitter about what God let him suffer.
When life isn't fair, . . .

We can choose to become bitter; or, We can choose to trust God.

Naomi chose bitterness! Enduring difficult circumstances—economic hard times caused by famine, job relocation, her husband's death, loss of two adult sons—she said:

"Don't call me Naomi (= "pleasant"); just call me "bitter"—that's how I feel about life!

We're tempted to feel that way sometimes, aren't we?

We try to be faithful to God, but others don't appreciate it.

Things go wrong. People criticize and attack. So we become angry and bitter.
 If *anyone* ever had a right to feel that way, Joseph did!

And yet, **Joseph chose to trust God!**

He dared to dream big dreams about the future!

Dreams he was dreaming weren't *his* dreams; they were *God's* dreams!

How could Joseph dare to dream God's dreams?

He was able to dream God's dreams because he never lost his perspective
—he never lost sight of God —His presence and His care in his life.

JOSEPH'S BIRTH

30:22-24

Firstborn of his mother after years of being unable to have children.

His birth caused praise: her shame had been lifted.

She named him "Joseph" => "may He add." She desired that God give her *another* son.

JOSEPH'S COMPETITION WITH HIS BROTHERS

37:1-14

This epoch wasn't his spiritual nor his personal "high!"

The foolishness of Joseph's youth

At 17, **Joseph tattles on his brothers** **37:2**

Tending flocks with them, he brought back a bad report

His report didn't endear him to his brothers!

Joseph "shares" his dreams with his family. **37:5-11**

Causes them to hate him all the more.

God demonstrates His choice of Joseph; yet they hate him and set out to destroy him.

Joseph knows something's going on—he spends some time meditating on it!

The brothers respond in jealousy; they hate the one God has chosen.

If they kill him, the dream won't be fulfilled and they won't have to serve him!

"We'll see what happens to his *"dream"* then!"

The error of Joseph's father Displayed his preference for Joseph over his brothers

Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers 37:3

You'd expect *Jacob* to know better.

He learned first hand how parental favoritism can destroy a family.

He repeats pattern he learned in his own home.

Jacob made a fancy robe to honor Joseph 37:3

(Probably an indicator of authority)

The brothers all knew what was going on; they **hated Joseph** 37:4

They couldn't say a kind word to him

Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers, to see what they were up to! 37:12-14

Joseph's leadership in the family

1 Chron. 5:1-2

The rights of the firstborn, that belonged to Reuben were taken away because he defiled his father's marriage bed.

Instead of giving them to Judah, the 2nd and strongest son, the rights of the firstborn, the double portion of the inheritance, and leadership over his brothers passed to Joseph.

Deut. 33:13, 16 He is the prince among his brothers

Northern kingdom is identified with his name, because his are the rights of the firstborn, and his sons form the main tribes.

Even in future kingdom, Ezek. 47-48, he receives double portion.

JOSEPH'S MISTREATMENT BY HIS BROTHERS

37:14b-36

Their plot against him

The brothers plot to kill Joseph 37:14b-20

Reuben attempts to protect Joseph 37:21-22

Reuben and Judah (2 oldest!) are instruments God uses to protect him.

The brothers mistreat Joseph and sell him into slavery 37:23-28, 36

He's stripped, thrown into cistern, and sold

Ps. 105:16-19

Joseph had every reason to be bitter

Against his dad

Against his brothers

Against the slave traders

Against GOD!!

If anyone ever had a reason for bitterness, it was Joseph!

But he chooses NOT to be bitter!
He chooses to trust God in the dark!

Though mistreated and abused by brothers, God protects his life.

The brothers deceive their father 37:29-35

[God provides insight into what's going on behind the scenes in Acts 7:]

God intervenes and protects Joseph Acts 7:9-10 (9-18)

The patriarchs were jealous of him.

They sold him as a slave into Egypt.

But God was with Joseph

God rescued Joseph from all his troubles.

It doesn't mean he escaped from all the problems

He was aware of God's presence; God protected him in the midst of all the trouble!

[Joseph never loses his perspective:]

Though, as you read the ongoing account of events, you wonder why!

It certainly didn't *FEEL* like God was working on his side!

Joseph acknowledges God's good purposes Gen. 50:20

God uses conflict between Joseph and his brothers to preserve Jacob's family.

God moves them to Egypt where He prepares them for life as a nation.

Didn't feel like it at the time!

Boll weevil invasion!!

Strange monument in Enterprise, Alabama—a **memorial to a bug!**—a boll weevil. Everyone raised cotton. But a beetle invasion hit the area and wiped out their crops. **George Washington Carver** tried to find a substitute crop. Peanuts was the answer; they could be planted and harvested with little loss. Cotton gins were forgotten. Profits exceeded their best cotton yield. Destructive insect made them rich!

Butterfly coming out of cocoon

Wacky cake!

Joseph believed God's promise—

Joseph had a practical view of God's sovereignty!

Both foundational principles become more evident late in life but they begin to evidence themselves at an early age.

Joseph never forgot the dream!

He sometimes struggled to make sense out of it, but he never forgot it!

Joseph had to trust God in the dark!

***Joseph was able to keep dreaming God's dreams
because he never lost his perspective!***

He never lost sight of God!

WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS WE LEARN BY OBSERVING JOSEPH'S LIFE?

At least three—you may think of some others!

1. Adverse circumstances may be part of God's plan to perfect us!
2. Adverse circumstances may be part of God's plan to bless us!
3. We can trust God, even when we can't understand what He's doing!